



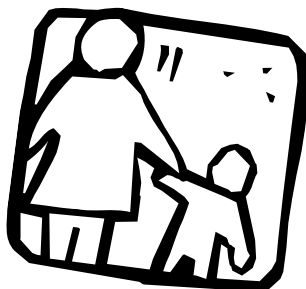
# Exploring Nature Together

Welcome to the Wisconsin Explorer (WE) program! Here is some information to help you explore and discover Wisconsin's State Parks with kids.

## Grown-ups play key role

As you explore the outdoors, let kids lead the way. You will discover amazing things together. Keep these things in mind:

- ✦ It's OK to say "I don't know." Look for answers together, ask park staff, go to the library, or search the Internet later.
- ✦ Rediscover your own sense of curiosity. Kids will be more excited about nature if you are interested in it, too.
- ✦ Be honest about any fears you have, but don't let your fears stop kids from exploring.
- ✦ Model respect for living things and the places you visit. Remember, actions speak louder than words.
- ✦ Invest in some simple tools such as magnifying lenses, binoculars, aquarium nets, or simple field guides.
- ✦ Make spending time in wild places an essential part of your outdoor vacation.



## Families explore together

To encourage families to explore together, the first four activities in each Wisconsin Explorer booklet share common themes. For

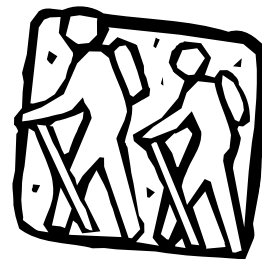
example, a preschooler might be watching birds while a 7-year-old is looking for feathers and a 10-year-old is trying to identify birds. Encourage children to help and learn from each other.



## Things to do

### Take a nature hike

Dress in layers, wear comfortable shoes, pack some water and snacks, and choose an exciting destination. Along the way, plan rest stops and take time to enjoy nature. A family walking stick is a good tradition. Whoever is carrying the stick leads the way, sets the pace, and decides where to stop.



### Keep a nature journal

Use a notebook to remember your hikes and nature explorations. Record who, when, how, and where. Ask each person to record the most and least favorite parts of the experience. Add wildlife sightings, scenic views, or memorable moments. Some day your journal will be a reminder of the experiences, joys, disasters, and fun that make visiting state parks a wonderful tradition.

### Plan ahead

Encourage kids to explore on their own, but set age-appropriate limits. If you have wanderers, equip them with whistles. Teach them that if they get lost or separated from the group, they should stop moving, sit down, and blow their whistles. Take a cell phone (turned off, of course) on your hike. You can't count on good reception, but it might help in an emergency.

### Connect to nature

Today, many kids are growing up in structured environments that don't allow much time or freedom to play outdoors. By helping them connect to things they discover in nature, you nurture values of good stewardship and build strong bonds that will last for a lifetime.